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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet on taking action in the community is the third of 16 in a series to provide leaders in adult activities with sound introductory material to give practical help in using a method of adult education or working in a particular area. Its objective is to help leaders plan and carry out a constructive program of social change. Eleven articles and how-tos are included. "Initiating Social Action," "Mobilizing Organizations," and "Mobilizing the Neighbors" suggest attitudes and methods helpful in beginning the job of working with others and discovering people who are likely to cooperate. "Recommended Methods" is a checklist of techniques that experts from nine fields find most helpful in presenting their aims and programs to community groups. The article "When People are Ready" shows specific ways to capitalize on a community's wish to solve its problems. "Community Apathy" is intended to help leaders see whether their analysis of community needs, plans, and techniques are adequate. Action groups are the focus of "From Ideas to Action." "Phases of Community Action" is a chart that provides a key to overall planning. "Counter-Attack" and "A Quick Look Into Conflict" help to anticipate difficulties and prevent emergencies as programs begin to affect the community. Attitudes of conformity or unthinking acceptance of things as they are are considered in "The Lost Art of Controversy." A bibliography is provided. (YLB)

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Leadership Pamphlet #3

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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A practical aid to leaders in
educational, governmental,
welfare, health, farm, religious,
industrial, community and
other groups.

TAKING ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY

How can you plan—
and carry out—
a constructive program
of social change?

These aids-to-action will help:

- guides to overall planning
- checklist of recommended methods
- suggestions for initiating action
- flow-chart of action in process
- ways to handle attack
- selected listing of resources

Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.

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Leadership Pamphlets are prepared and distributed by the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. Each pamphlet provides leaders in adult activities with sound introductory material which can give practical help in using an important method of adult education or working in a particular area with insight and skill.

Pamphlets in this series are:

- P1 —How to Lead Discussions
- P2 —Planning Better Programs
- P3 —Taking Action in the Community
- P4 —Understanding How Groups Work
- P5 —How to Teach Adults
- P6 —How to Use Role Playing
- P7 —Supervision and Consultation
- P8 —Training Group Leaders
- P9 —Conducting Workshops and Institutes
- P10—Working with Volunteers
- P11—Conferences that Work
- P12—Getting and Keeping Members
- P13—Effective Public Relations
- P14—Better Boards and Committees
- P15—Streamlining Parliamentary Procedure
- P16—Training in Human Relations

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TAKING ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY

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*This article and the two following were prepared collaboratively by William B. Baker, Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, Regina, Saskatchewan; Kenneth D. Benne, Human Relations Center, Boston University; Albert S. Foley, S.J., Visiting Fellow at the Research Center for Group Dynamics, University of Michigan; Herbert C. Hayward, Bureau of Health, Knoxville, Tennessee.



FOR LEADERS

There is one big pitfall into which an adult leader can fall in initiating social action in the community, but it's easy to fall into. This pitfall is to feel or act as though you, the leader, were all alone. There are always others in the community who share your concern and will be willing to share in the action.

The quickest way to fall into the pit is to decide by yourself what is the problem calling for social action. If the action in the community is to be successful, it must involve the other people who are concerned. But since action on any problem begins with the definition of it, the people who are to act must begin with defining the problem. This is not merely a technique of involving others in solving the problem as *you* diagnosed it. It is necessary for you to share the ideas of all the others to be quite sure that you know what the problem is. Anyone can be wrong, any group can be wrong, but the chances for successful social action are improved if all those concerned share in diagnosing the problem.

The next easiest way to fall into the pit is to prescribe the remedy by yourself. If the action in the community is to be successful, it must involve the other people who are also concerned. But since action on any problem begins with canvassing the various kinds of action that may be taken and assessing the probable results, the people who are to act must begin by making this canvass. This is not merely a technique of involving others in an action program. It is necessary for you to share the opinions of all the others in order to be quite sure that, within the limits of human frailty, you have canvassed all the possibilities. The chances for successful social action are better if all those concerned have shared in formulating the plan.

If you have managed to stay out of the pit this far, your next worry is to keep the others you are working with from falling into the pit. This will be successful social action.



INTRODUCTION

Sooner or later most of us become concerned about changes taking place in our communities or changes we want to bring about. Perhaps new industries come to town and in a space of weeks our schools are overcrowded, there are too many cars on the streets, there are not enough houses to go around. We want to do something about these conditions. Where do we start? And how?

Or we live in a community which has gone to seed. Can we discover resources for pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps? Can we develop new ways of working out problems of community apathy?

"Initiating Social Action" (p.5), "Mobilizing Organizations" (p. 7), and "Mobilizing the Neighbors" (p. 11), suggest attitudes and methods helpful in beginning the job of working with others and discovering people who are likely to cooperate. "Phases of Community Action" (p. 32) is a chart that provides a key to overall planning.

The "Recommended Methods" (p. 14) is a checklist of techniques that experts from 9 different fields of work find most helpful in presenting their particular aims and programs to community groups.

"When People are Ready," (p. 16) shows some specific ways to capitalize on a community's wish to solve its problems. "Community Apathy?" (p. 22) helps us see whether our analysis of community needs, our plans and techniques are adequate.

"From Ideas to Action" (p. 27) is directed primarily to the individual who feels the need to "do something" about a community problem.

If we begin to act, we expect reactions from others. "Counter-Attack" (p. 34) and "A Quick Look Into Conflict" (p. 46) help to anticipate difficulties and prevent emergencies as our programs begin to affect the community.

"The Lost Art of Controversy" (p. 39) has some helpful insights and suggestions for people whose programs are "controversial" because they bring into question attitudes of conformity or unthinking acceptance of "things as they are".



INITIATING SOCIAL ACTION

WHEN some part of a community's life isn't working the way it should, people try to do something about it. They talk to their friends about what is wrong, what should be changed, and how. They hold meetings and try to get something done. Sometimes they organize new groups to tackle the problem, sometimes they try to stir established organizations to action. They try to arouse public interest (if not indignation), channel the efforts of other action groups and stimulate groups without action programs to act.

There is no lack of problems demanding action, and there is no lack of groups that want to do something about them. But often, the men and women concerned about housing or the school bus or the UN, do not know how an action group gets going. They hesitate to start on the rough and rocky course from, "something should be done," through "we want to do this," to "we've done it—" and "now what next?"

HOW TO GET GOING

In order to get action, they must influence the people around them, change their attitudes, awaken their interest. Other people must get concerned about the problem, too. A good many people must agree on what a good solution is, one that is good enough to try, at least. And they must find ways of putting the solution into effect, of working it into the life of the community.

The action group needs to accomplish these changes if its ideas are not to die stillborn. But typically, some people outside the group *resist* their ideas. Some don't even want the problem discussed. Some don't see any problem to get excited about. Some admit there is a

problem but don't see that any practical solution is possible. Lots of people are too busy with other things to spend time on it.

TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE

The *friends* of the action group may present difficulties, too. They may be riding one solution so hard that they will not consider other possibilities. They may have other axes to grind, which the action group doesn't share. They may favor methods that will hurt rather than help the project. How does the action group raise its voice within this medley of contending voices?

An action group committed to democratic values as well as to successful action on a particular problem will probably agree that any project it undertakes should have these general characteristics—

(a) The project should be educational. People reached in carrying out the project should become better informed about the problem they are asked to work on.

Even more important, as a result of their experience in working on this project, people should be better able to take action together on other problems. The community should be better tooled for democratic action on other problems as a result of working together on this one.

(b) The project should be approached experimentally. The group cannot know the right answers to the problem before it starts to work on it. This means that planning should be flexible. Each step in the project should be planned in the light of the best information available, including information obtained through preceding steps, and should be designed to gather information for planning succeeding steps.

(c) The project should be collaborative. It should be based on genuine participation of the people involved in each step of the project as it moves along. It should provide for constructive contributions toward practical solutions of community problems. As many as possible of the people who will be affected by the project should be involved in making decisions. Their thinking, as well as their leg work and manpower, should find its way into the solution of the problem.

How does an action group, committed to these values, go about initiating social action? ♦ ♦

MOBILIZING ORGANIZATIONS

IN initiating any action program it is important for an action group to know its friends—to know the kinds of support it can expect from whom. It is also important for the group to know its enemies—the kinds of opposition it is likely to run into, and from what quarters. Every action group must alert and organize support specifically for a given program and must meet and overcome opposition or inertia, or both.

First of all, the action group will wish to know the official attitude of the organizations. In the inter-racial area, for example, how have they stood on segregation?

Their typical pattern of taking action is important in predicting what they are likely to do. Which type or types of action has the organization used—1) informing their members about social problems and providing discussion opportunities to them; 2) informing other citizens and holding meetings and workshops where social problems can be discussed; 3) direct action—picketing, boycotts, strikes, etc.; 4) pressure on official agencies and legislative bodies; 5) varied campaigns including study, publicity and pressure.

How, if at all, does the organization usually collaborate with other organizations in action projects? Which of the following patterns of collaboration do they use—1) joint programming with other organizations; 2) sending official representatives to joint councils or committees—either as observers or as full participants; 3) parallel programs with other organizations; 4) endorsement and sponsorship of campaigns of other organizations; 5) financial contributions to campaigns.

What a local organization will be able to do in promoting or opposing an action project will depend in a large measure upon how its program and policies

are formed. Do the local officers determine the program? Or do rank and file members participate actively in program planning? Is the organization's program for the most part determined by a parent national or state organization?

How strong is the organization? How is it seen in the community? What parts of the community may its support of a project alienate? What parts of the community will its support attract? And, if it opposes the project, what influence will it have?

Where to look.

One place to find information needed to analyze probable support and opposition is in printed records. Newspaper stories and releases, annual reports and special reports, statements of purpose, and community surveys

MAP OF ORGANIZATIONAL POTENTIALS

The action group may prepare a map of the organizations which have been concerned in their action area, according to the kinds of support or resistance they are likely to furnish. This chart suggests a basis for building such a map.

Names of Organizations

or studies, all may give indications of an organization's potential for action.

Often more up-to-date and specific information is available from the action group's own members. They are usually also members of other organizations. Or they may have friends and acquaintances who are members.

Frequently, such information needs to be supplemented by sending an observer to a meeting of the organization or by inviting representatives of the organization to meet with the initiating group and discuss their action program.

Many action groups operate on an opportunistic basis in locating and using potential support and resistance. For example, some member volunteers to ask his friend, who is president of Organization X, to lend a hand. Or a group starting out on a mental health project

Probable Relation to Project	What They Can Be Expected to Do
Active partnership and collaboration in project, along with financial and moral support	Furnish workers for committee work, door-bell ringing, interviewing, promotion, fund raising, etc.
Financial support, along with moral support	Furnish funds for publicity, consultants, etc.
Moral support	Allow use of organization's name as sponsor, may devote one or more programs to the project.
Neutral—positive bias	Make interpretive announcements about project at meetings or in newsletters, may distribute educational materials to members.
Neutral—negative bias	Admit forum discussion of project at their meetings, may permit initiating group to make announcements.
Opposed	Slant public and member opinion against, may organize opposition, but may furnish "other side" in forums and debates.

expects every other organization that is concerned with child welfare—the American Legion, the PTA, the Department of Welfare, the public schools, and the Juvenile Court—to get behind them in the same way. So they ask each organization for the same kinds of help. Or the action group may issue a broadside call for support.

This sometimes works well. But the hoped for support may not be forthcoming. And important sources of potentially strong support may be overlooked. In addition, opposition may overwhelm the project before it gets started.

An accurate map of probable organizational support and resistance for a given project will help the action group not to overestimate the support or to underestimate the opposition its project will probably receive.

As it moves to the stage of asking other organizations to help, the map will enable it to ask each organization to give the kinds and amount of support it is likely to be able and ready to give.

The action group may also use its map in drawing up announcements of its projects for various organizations. This does not mean being all things to all people. It means trying to communicate in such a way as to get a fair and honest consideration of ideas and plans.

The group's preliminary mapping may be inaccurate. And support and resistance may change as the action program develops. The group should plan to correct its map as it moves from step to step.

PUTTING THE OPPOSITION TO WORK

An action group, believing strongly in its goals, may tend to see the opposition only as an interfering force to be blocked or beaten down. This attitude may prevent it from seeing that *responsible* opposition may be very useful to an action project. Honest opposition can be used to pre-test an action proposal. Objections may point up weaknesses in the plan. Probing questions may reveal undesirable end results which the action group and its friends were unable to see for themselves. Responsible opposition can serve an important function in public presentation of the other side as well as the pro-side to a proposed action. ◇ ◇



MOBILIZING THE NEIGHBORS

AN action group cannot reach the people of a community by depending on formal organizations alone.

Some people don't belong to organizations. And some who do belong aren't very active in them. But everybody belongs to kinship and friendship groups. Word about events, problems and projects, as well as other things, is passed through the communication network of gossip and conversation which these groupings provide. This network, as we all know, doesn't carry merely objective reports of events. It carries selected reports, interpretations and commentaries on the news. So people's judgments and attitudes about what is happening or should happen in the community are influenced, often decisively, by these communications.

In addition, there are in every neighborhood people to whose judgments other people defer. These people may or may not be active or influential in formal organizations. Frequently they are not.

No matter how long the members of the action group have lived in a community, they can know only parts of it. Other people know other parts of it better. Action groups, even though they don't have trained sociologists to work with them, can get access to roughly the same knowledge about their own community which a sociological survey might reveal. How can this be done?

The action group may establish a random sample of the people in the community. Every tenth or twentieth

name may be taken at random from a city directory or from assessor's lists. Telephone directories may be used, but they introduce a bias in favor of higher income groups.

The people in this random sample may then be asked to name the people who know most about the kinship and friendship groupings of the community, about which people visit each other, neighbor together, as well as those who are embroiled in feuds and divisions. By selecting the names most frequently mentioned, the action group will locate a panel of the community's human relations experts with whom they can consult.

LOCATING THE PANEL—METHOD 2

There are certain roles in every community which require people who are experts in local human relations. These roles vary from community to community. Some potential panel members are: local political leaders, police chief, the city editor of a local newspaper, and community chest officials. In some communities, community minded school principals and members of the clergy, as well as old time residents of both sexes should be added to the list. These roles may define a useful panel



which an action group can consult, although it is likely to suffer from prestige bias.

USING THE PANEL

There are many uses which an action group may make of the advice and judgment of these community experts. With their help they can construct a map of the community. Or they may prefer to ask the panel to advise them on various steps in their action planning. They may be consulted through interviews, or asked to meet at times with the action group. The following are two suggestions out of many possible ways to use the panel:

Example a)—*The action group wishes to send letters about a forthcoming meeting or demonstration to key people who will spread the news by word of mouth.* The panel of experts may be asked to furnish lists of key people, or to criticize and supplement lists prepared by the action group.

Example b)—*The action group is planning an invitational conference. They want to include key people in the informal power structure of the community as well as organizational representatives. Whom do they invite?* The panel of experts may criticize an initial list which the action group has prepared.

Among other possibilities, the panel should be able to give invaluable advice if an action group wants to check public reaction to its program, or wishes to locate key people to serve on neighborhood committees or to lay the groundwork for such projects as house to house canvasses.

LOCATING INFORMAL LEADERS

An adaptation of Method 1 may be used to locate leaders in whom many people have confidence, as well as to spot reliable informants about community relations. A random sample of community members is prepared. The people in this sample are asked to name the men or women they know who would be good for helping on a specific project—to get better housing, to get better schools, to clean up city hall, depending on the area of social action with which the group is concerned. ◇ ◇

RECOMMENDED METHODS

To bring you this table of methods, we asked nine leaders in important fields of social action to check the ten techniques which their experience shows are most important for local leaders to learn to use. Their recommendations, by field, are printed here.

	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Labor</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Civil Defense</i>	<i>Business and Industry</i>	<i>Adult Education</i>	<i>Cooperatives</i>	<i>Intergroup Relations</i>
FACT-FINDING TECHNIQUES									
Door-to-door canvass								✓	
Interviews	✓		✓				✓		
Opinion polls	✓								
Field trips				✓	✓	✓	✓		
Community surveys	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Diagnosis of community forces		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
PUBLICITY TECHNIQUES									
Press	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Radio	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
Television	✓								
House organs								✓	
Newsletters		✓		✓		✓			
Posters		✓				✓			
Displays		✓				✓			
Movies		✓							
Announcements									
Public speeches				✓		✓			✓
Pamphlets					✓				

INFLUENCE AND INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

Interviews							✓		
Mass meetings									
Community workshops					✓				
Leadership training institutes		✓			✓				
Door-to-door canvass								✓	
Delegations to public officials			✓	✓					
Delegations to other organizations			✓						✓
Letter-writing campaigns						✓			
Sponsorships and endorsements				✓					✓
Telephone campaigns				✓					
Informal personal contacts	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Resolutions									
Circulating petitions				✓					
Picketing		✓							
Boycotting									
Arbitration									
Come-and-see tours						✓		✓	
Meeting-discussion-meeting							✓		
Problem census	✓								

ORGANIZATION TECHNIQUES

Face-to-face groups	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committees	✓			✓		✓	✓		
Block organizations			✓		✓				
Community councils			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Mass meetings									



WHEN PEOPLE ARE READY

FRONT Royal had problems. So had Warren County. They were bursting at the seams. Housing, school buildings, school budget, school busses, recreation and health facilities were inadequate. Water and sewage systems met less than half the need. Even the stores, laundries, cleaning establishments were unable to expand fast enough to serve the doubled population of a suddenly urbanized small rural county. A county population of 8,340, relatively stable since pre-Revolutionary days, had grown within a few years to more than 15,000. The one town to provide services, Front Royal, had fewer than 1,300 inhabitants.

Intolerances existed. Old-timers resented the newcomers and their demands. Conservative citizens resented the changes brought about when a large and permanent industry moved in, attracting the newcomers. Even many of those who had been eager to have the industry locate in their county began to resent the influx of organized labor.

The industry had not come uninvited. But it had come to a community whose officials and citizens hadn't realized that "progress meant change." They had looked to the industry as a solution to their problems. Instead the sleepy, slow-moving rural area was catapulted into new problems on so many fronts that citizens and officials were bewildered. They began milling around wanting to do something, but they had no established machinery for planning.

Things happened so fast during the war years that the county had been able to do little more than brace itself for each new impact. With the end of the war,

however, citizens became increasingly aware of the need to plan for both social and physical needs.

The P.T.A. sponsored a series of forums attended by all groups interested in community problems. People talked about housing, recreation, hospital facilities, and similar needs. The forums were well attended and frequently led to action on one specific problem or another. Yet P.T.A. leaders and others felt that they were not seeing the specific problems in relation to the best development of the *total community*. Sometimes the immediate solution was not in line with later developments. It was a partial repair job.

With the idea of a general overhauling in mind, the County Education Association turned to the Extension Division of the University. A planning committee met with representatives of the Extension Division's Community Services. Among those present were the school superintendent and principals, the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, an officer of the Textile Workers Union, a member of the town council, and other interested citizens. In the discussion, three primary needs became clear: (1) that various interest groups (e.g. the union and the service clubs) all working toward the same end should know each other and learn to work together; (2) that everyone should understand the whole situation and see problems in relation to the needs of the total community, and (3) that the planning groups, official and unofficial, should arrive at long-range objectives and make immediate plans in line with these objectives.

CITIZENS STUDY THE PROBLEM

To attain these ends, the committee decided to organize a study group. It was limited to about 25 so that all members could take part in the discussions. An attempt was made to select a *cross-section of points of view* rather than representatives of organizations. Previous experience had convinced the Community Services staff that consciousness of being "a representative" greatly weakens an individual's helpfulness.

Because of the interest of the district superintendent, the school principals, and the elementary supervisor, a workshop for school personnel was set up to study school-community problems, paralleling the work of the citizens'

group. The citizens' group met in the high-school library one Friday night each month. On the following Saturday morning the entire school personnel of Front Royal and Warren County met in the same room. The teacher group was represented in the Friday-night group and so kept informed about problems and progress.

Each group was divided into working committees which met between the monthly meetings. The citizens' workshop formed committees on health and hospital programs, recreation, housing, and public administration. The school committees considered such matters as evaluation of the school program with respect to present and future needs, recreational activities of students, influence of home life on school life, and activities that provide for school and community cooperation.

SPECIALISTS ADVISE

Two staff members of Community Services attended all meetings of both groups and frequently met with committees. After exploring interests and helping each group to determine directions at the first meetings, they invited specialists from various departments of the University and from state agencies to assist in the studies. The Bureau of Population Studies and Economic Research, for example, supplied material on population trends for the area. A staff member of the Bureau helped the group to make pretty accurate estimates not only of present needs—in housing, school facilities, hospital beds, etc.—but also of probable needs in 1950, 1960, 1980. The Bureau of Public Administration was asked for help in considering what was involved in the seemingly inevitable annexation of the surrounding territory—which two years later, “without bloodshed,” became reality in a much more pretentious way than had been thought of before the advice of the Bureau had been sought. Because the small town of 1,300 was bearing the burden of servicing an entire county of 15,000, a spread of the tax base was essential. The usual opposition developed among reluctant taxpayers in the county—and county outnumbered town by some 13,000. These 13,000, however, included most of the newcomers, and the plant itself. They wanted services to which they were accustomed and were willing to pay for them in taxes. In the end the modest proposal of

the town for an extension of a mile to include the plant was increased, so that 156 out of a total of 216 square miles were annexed. The few farmers remaining in the county were still unhappy. Later as a result of experience they decided that increased advantages more than justified the increased taxes.

A POOLING OF EXPERIENCE

No formal survey was undertaken. Rather the stress was on getting control of a *continuous process of community study in relation to resources and needs*. Seeing the function that should be served by community life was an important first step. Measuring the present effectiveness of this particular community in relation to its potential effectiveness came next. Finding ways of bringing all available resources to bear on needs was the main theme running throughout the meetings. Many in the group had already had experience in working on specific community problems. A pooling of experience and analysis *in light of the total community* was a fruitful procedure. The importance of citizen understanding and action, use of the *right expert at the right time*, relating segments to the total picture, and making decisions on the basis of the total picture were kept continuously in mind.

Keeping others informed of the thinking of the workshop was easier in Front Royal and Warren County than



in many communities. There was a wide-spread readiness on the part of many citizens. The officials presented no problem since some of them were among the most earnest seekers in the group. Editors of both the daily and the weekly papers attended regularly and reported faithfully. Individuals kept their organizations informed. The parallel teachers' workshop and the county-wide contacts established through this group formed an important link in the chain of communication. The teachers in the one- or two-room schools were able to interpret the situation to others in their communities. At the end of the workshop a mimeographed bulletin took "Recommendations of Warren County Teachers Association" into every school district and every organization in both town and county. Recommendations, addressed to several agencies which should be able to act, covered eight areas of concern. The following is an example:

HEALTH AND SANITATION

1. That children have a complete physical examination before entering school each year; that this may be accomplished by having a pre-school clinic in the workshop, with teachers helping doctors and nurses with clerical work.

Recommended by: Committee on Influence of Home on School Life.

Recommended to: Community organizations. Administration. School Board. Front Royal Elementary School. Warren County High School. Rural Schools. P.T.A. Public Health Department.

2. That where possible the buildings be provided with modern conveniences: electricity, running water and indoor toilets.

Recommended by: Committee on Differences in Rural and Urban Schools.

Recommended to: Administration. School Board. P.T.A. Public Health Department.

Each teacher took responsibility for talking over the recommendations with the local people.

The problem of *satisfying everyone*, of course, still remains a problem. Yet a good number of the resisters—especially those in the workshop—became zealous converts. They found that the union members were “pretty good guys when you got to know them.”

During early meetings, members kept saying, “We must be sure to make a plan so this work will continue after the meetings end.” By the time the meetings ended in May, a plan seemed unnecessary. There was no need to launch a program. The program had never ceased but had rather steadied itself and found its direction.

Most important of all was the fact that control of the process of community planning had spread far beyond the workshop members and school personnel. They had carried it into their organizations and agencies. There the process continues and the county has gone far beyond the partial-repair stage. ◇ ◇



“I’m organizing a committee for community action. Are you interested?”



COMMUNITY APATHY?

Many people complain about community apathy when they don't even have a community, a true community, to talk about. A careful examination of a town, a neighborhood, or a city may reveal that there is no reason to expect *community* action or feeling. Your area may be completely unorganized so that it cannot be appealed to as a community.

More likely it is divided into warring factions or is simply a mass of unrelated, self-centered groups of people. Different groups may include many people devoted to their group's goals. There may be people highly interested in their trade union, bridge club, church organization, nationality group, fraternal order, etc. But there seems to be no awareness of community needs, no interest in joining together in community action. What can you do?

The Red-Feather campaigns in some of the large cities are an example of one way to tackle the problem of the non-existent community. Many different organizations, even ones in competition with each other, are involved in a community campaign by being used as already existing organizations with real interests.

What community goals are you and your organization interested in? What real stake in them do other groups in your area have? Do you know enough about

your community and the groups in it? If various groups can be got to working together, even competitively, toward a common goal, you will have a real community—and less community apathy.

***Apathy* OR BAD PLANNING?**

The big guns are wheeled into position for a new campaign. Loaded with sure-fire community ammunition, they are aimed at the target. The zero-hour comes. The order to fire is issued. The gunners go through the motions of firing the opening salvos in the campaign. But nothing happens. The plans misfire. Are you sure it was community apathy?

Maybe there was something wrong with the firing pin. Maybe failure was due to the absence of the key person or the key slogan, the initial spark that would have set the community on fire. There is an old saying, "Well begun is half won." Getting your campaign off on the right foot is vitally important.

Often enough you see a community campaign get off with a lucky start that means success. A low-budget film, perhaps, even though it is presented without much advance publicity, fires people's imagination. Or a few people accidentally interested in a community project bring unexpected resources into the campaign.

Nobody can object to good luck, but why depend on it? Careful planning could have seen that the campaign would get off to a successful start. What plans have succeeded in your community? What ones have failed? Why? What people and what organizations would be most successful in getting the community interested in the action program you are planning? The community leader who has his finger on his community's pulse—who knows the processes by which community campaigns succeed and fail in his town or neighborhood—has licked the problem of community apathy.

***Apathy* OR POOR PREPARATION?**

Sometimes community apathy is only the alibi that a community leader uses to keep from admitting to himself that he went into battle with the wrong equipment. The new director of a community organization comes to



his post in an unfamiliar community. He is full of steam, hot air, and dreams. He roars into action with all his pet projects—ones he learned about at school, ones he successfully engineered somewhere else, ones he dreamed up as ideal projects for an ideal community. Meeting with resistance and indifference, he blames the community for its apathy.

If this picture looks familiar, you had better check your equipment. Have you put in the legwork necessary to acquaint yourself with the record of your own organization, your predecessors, and your community? Or have you rushed into battle practically unarmed—trying to use World War I weapons to fight World War II?

***Apathy* OR FAULTY SPONSORSHIP?**

Sometimes a community project fails not because of any public apathy but because the persons or groups who have sponsored it put the kiss of death on it by their very sponsorship.

A new worker, unaware of the past records of powerful people or groups in the city, naively asks them to sponsor his project. He assumes that his work will go better

because of the big names on his letterhead, the big corporations lending him support, the big politicians pressuring their constituents for action.

Actually a program may be doomed to failure from the start because of its sponsorship. An appeal may miscarry simply from the bored reaction: "Oh, those same old names. Into the wastebasket with it."

A number of worthwhile organizations have received the kiss of death through real or suspected association with Communists. Take the case of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare designed to relieve interracial tensions. Communists, by joining the SCHW, sponsoring it, and praising it in the *Daily Worker*, kissed the Conference to death.

Sponsors, like gift horses, should have their teeth closely examined.

Apathy OR POOR TIMING?

Faulty timing can kill even the most urgent action program. People born on December 27 don't get many birthday presents. Similarly at the end of a year in which the community has been subjected to three dozen drives for worthy, semi-worthy, and unworthy causes, an eager-beaver organization sallying forth with drive number 37 gets a cool reception.

A case in point was the carefully planned and urgently needed workshop in community relations held in Chicago last year. It was scheduled for the dog days of August, when community activity and interest are at their all-year low level. Scheduled at another time of year, the workshop might have been over registered. As it was, it drew less than half as many applicants as were planned for.

Apathy OR AUTOCRATIC LEADERS?

A sort of mental sit-down strike is declared by the community confronted by autocratic "do-gooders." Any plan presented as the sole solution to the community's problems, take it or leave it, will encounter resistance you can't shrug off as community apathy.

Are you certain that in your eagerness to achieve

some worthwhile goal you always show enough patience and respect for the persons and organizations that you are working *for* and *with*? The prize that an autocratic leader pays for his methods is the resistance, not the apathy, of the democratic majority.

Watch the way in which a newly elected slate of officials—in a club or in a city or state—sets to work. Enthusiasm, plans, ideals are fine, as long as they are communicated and shared rather than imposed on people. New brooms sweep clean—or break.

Apathy OR THE WRONG APPROACH?

The attitude of the community worker or organization often has as much to do with success or failure as the worthwhileness of the goal or the carefulness with which plans have been made. The wrong approaches to social action create opposition rather than cooperation.

In some communities, for example, there will be a clear reluctance to being social guinea pigs and "let's make this a test case" will be quite the wrong approach. In other communities, it may be successful. There must always be a careful consideration of the local conditions, but some generalizations seem reasonable.

Attempts to bring social pressure to bear are likely to boomerang where friendly and persuasive methods would succeed. When advertisers tried to "threaten" parents that their children would feel underprivileged without a television set, there was a howl of protest.

No approach, however, is so wrong as the befuddled, confused approach of the person or organization not quite clear about what it wants or how it wants to get it. The confused leader deserves a confused following. Usually he gets even less—no following at all. That is what he means by community apathy.

This article does not intend to say that there is no such thing as community apathy. It has tried to point out that people mean different things when they complain of apathy and has suggested that often the problem of community apathy is really a problem of faulty community analysis by the community leader. ◇ ◇

FROM IDEAS TO ACTION

SOcial action doesn't get going effectively without a group to spearhead the effort required. Of course, initially, an individual or several individuals may have felt the need for doing something. When Jerry McCracken fell down the steep and rickety stairs of the old elementary school building and broke his arm, it was Mr. and Mrs. McCracken who first got the idea that something could and should be done to improve the school building. But as they were moved to take action, they found themselves appealing to other people to help them. Whether it was people in an established group—the PTA perhaps—who responded to their appeal or whether a new group got formed for the purpose, the McCrackens, if anyone else listened, soon found their action idea taken up and sponsored by a group.

As the group took action to get the school building improved, they in turn appealed to other organizations and individuals in the community to help. And, if they were successful, the responsibilities for planning and acting spread beyond their group to include other people, other groups. Ideally, the new or improved school building when it came was the considered achievement of the whole community.

In nearly every successful action project, some group lies between the McCrackens who are initially moved to act and the community that needs to be roused and informed and in some cases built, if the action is to be

consummated. The action group is a strategic link in the chain of successful community improvement.

FORCES AGAINST TAKING ACTION

The main theme, whatever the variations, in the life of the action group is to plan changes in its environment and to move outside itself to work these changes out.

Everyday a multitude of wise ideas for action die without becoming actions. They may get no further than the level of a good intention in the mind of some individual to do something. Many of these ideas die without becoming the property of a group. But even in cases where individuals take the first step of getting their action ideas considered favorably by a group, the mortality is still high. Groups, like individuals, have trouble in moving ideas and plans past the stage of good intentions. The world is a poorer and uglier place to live in because good ideas tend to remain words and dreams and fail to become actions. What are the main forces keeping so many of our wise potential actions from becoming actions in the public world outside our private group? And what can be done about them?

What will other people think? Private ideas are fairly safe so long as they remain private. But actions are exposed to public view and review. Most of us have come to expect negative rather than positive responses from others when we attempt to initiate new actions.

Why do we expect to be jumped on rather than supported? Probably one reason is that in our personal life histories, during our early years, when we were awkwardly initiating many new actions every day, we were much more frequently punished than praised for our initiative. So we have developed deep doubts about the public acceptability of our action ideas when they come to mind.

No doubt there are enough dramatic examples in our adult environment of condemnation and recrimination against publicly advocated changes in social patterns to reinforce these childhood fears of venturing on our own, and to keep alive an irrational overcaution against

acting on our thinking when our thinking points toward change. But it is also true that our fellow men, at least some of them, are much more ready to endorse and support wise actions than we ordinarily believe.

The only effective antidote to irrational fears about what other people will feel and think about something new is to gather facts about what they actually do think and feel about it. Outside support which can be predicted confidently on the basis of facts lends security to action efforts. Outside recriminations which can be predicted confidently can also be prepared for with confidence.

We sometimes feel that ideas are good or valid because they are old and traditional; we sometimes feel that other ideas are good because they are new and scientific. We have set a standard for making judgments on the basis of oldness or newness, but there is an alternative standard we could set with respect to judging ideas. This alternative standard would support and honor judgments of ideas on the basis of whether or not they promise to solve the problems of community life when they are put into action. No doubt, to become fully effective, this standard will have to be built into families and schools, where the basic attitudes of children toward action and inaction are built. But, meanwhile, we may start by trying to build the standard into the action groups in which we work.

Ideas without action are rewarded. Another reason why the risks of taking action seem unattractive is that rewards are so frequently given for wise ideas and good intentions when they are well stated, even when they are not followed by action. All of us have sat in classrooms where it is customary to create and refine ideas with the rewards of praise and a good grade going to the ones who can express ideas clearly and gracefully, not to those who seek to put ideas into practice in the public world. Many of us now sit on policy committees which congratulate themselves, and receive public praise too, for the eloquence and comprehensiveness of plans which are made on the assumption that some one else will carry them out. Also most of us pat ourselves and our friends on the back for being on the right side of an issue or for seeing clearly what ought to be done. If

the rewards and satisfaction are sufficient for holding and expressing beliefs and intentions which stop short of action, we are likely to forego the risks of completing our thinking through the initiation of action consistent with our beliefs.

The way to offset this tendency is to modify the basis on which reward and recognition are given in the groups in which we live and work, in families and schools, in committees and organizations. Until we give at least as much recognition to the inventors of plans of action and to those who try their plans out as we do to people who create ideas about action and express these eloquently, groups and communities will continue to talk a better game than they play.

But we don't know how to do it. Even when our action ideas are fairly clear and compelling, we frequently inhibit action because we can't see how to carry out the action steps required or because we feel we would be conspicuously awkward if we tried to carry them out. None of us likes to be embarrassed by failure in trying out some new way of acting in public. All of us have felt at times that our skills weren't up to our ideas of what we ought to do. We were like the group of supervisors who all agreed it would be a good idea to initiate regular staff meetings in their working groups. But none of them did. After they had observed and discussed a demonstration of a staff meeting, and after each had had a chance to rehearse leading such a meeting with friendly criticism from the others, staff meetings did get started in all the working groups. Skills had been added to good intentions. Skill training had overcome the force inhibiting action in keeping with the intentions.

It takes more power than we have. It is true that most of the improvements any of us would like to make in our organization or our community and world call for more action strength than our own. This is why strategic action *groups* must emerge out of the initiations of action-oriented individuals. But action groups feel the same limitations on their own power to make the changes which their goals require. Most action ideas will seem hopeless to an individual or his group as long as they assume they are alone in their wish for improvement.

They will be able to see how their small action strength can have successful action effects only as they include the involvement of others as a central part of their action planning. Planning which maps out a series of action steps, each including a wider circle of persons and groups as partners in working toward the action goal, will help an action group see that present limitations of power do not preclude effective action.

WHAT CAN THE INDIVIDUAL DO?

What does this discussion mean for the individual who is dissatisfied with the gap between intentions and actions in himself and in the people around him? What can he do?

First of all, he can remember that there are reasons why people don't act. There are forces working against the translation of thinking and talking into action. The forces may be any or all of the four discussed in this article. Or there may be other forces operating which are not mentioned here. The individual can remember further that these forces can be changed. The remedy for not taking action is to understand the forces which keep people from acting.

Second, the individual can try to get a clear picture in his mind of how a small action of his can become significant, if he can use it to bring in the power of others to support his own.

Third, he can join, or create, a group that has goals of community, national or world improvement similar to his own. The group can provide testing, enlargement and reinforcement for the action ideas he has and wants to channel into action.

Fourth, he can try to establish rewards of recognition and honor, in his group and in his community, for the inventors of action plans, for those who act on their thinking, as well as for those who are satisfied merely to talk eloquently about action. He can work to create a social environment in which actions do speak louder than words. Only in such an environment will he and others become free to act as their thinking requires.



PHASES OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community action may be thought of as progressing through several phases. These phases do not necessarily fall in chronological order. But they occur, in one way or another, in every successful democratic action project as it is planned and carried through. Groups that want to improve their ways of working may find the following diagram useful in assessing and modifying their own methods of taking action.

Community groups must look two ways at every step, if they are to work effectively. They must look at themselves, at what is happening within the group. They must look also at the wider community of which they are a part, and which they must influence and change if there is any action.

LOOKING WITHIN THE ACTION GROUP

GETTING IDEAS AND FEELINGS OF MEMBERS ABOUT NEEDED ACTION

- every member's wishes—not just a few—are considered
- their pictures of what should and can be done are weighed thoughtfully

LOOKING AT THE COMMUNITY OUTSIDE

GETTING IDEAS AND FEELINGS OF THE COMMUNITY

- review picture of social action underway in community
- study reports of community surveys, if available
- discuss group's ideas with others

IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE ACTION TARGETS

- the most important community problems
- the ones that demand action first
- the ones the group can do something about

ASSESSING THE GROUP

- see the group as an instrument of social action
- find the target most in line with the group's purpose
- assess the group's limitations of time, resources, power
- decide which action will ready both group and community for further action
- look honestly at motives for undertaking the project

ASSESSING READINESS OF THE COMMUNITY

- study what has been done in the general areas being considered
- review probable relations of current action efforts to the project
- estimate probable support and opposition
- estimate community resources that can be rallied

SELECTING ONE ACTION TARGET

- a community concern of high priority
- a problem that members of the action group feel strongly about
- one that is realistic in terms of group's own resources and the support it may expect to get from outside

See
Note
A

See
Note
B

Note A

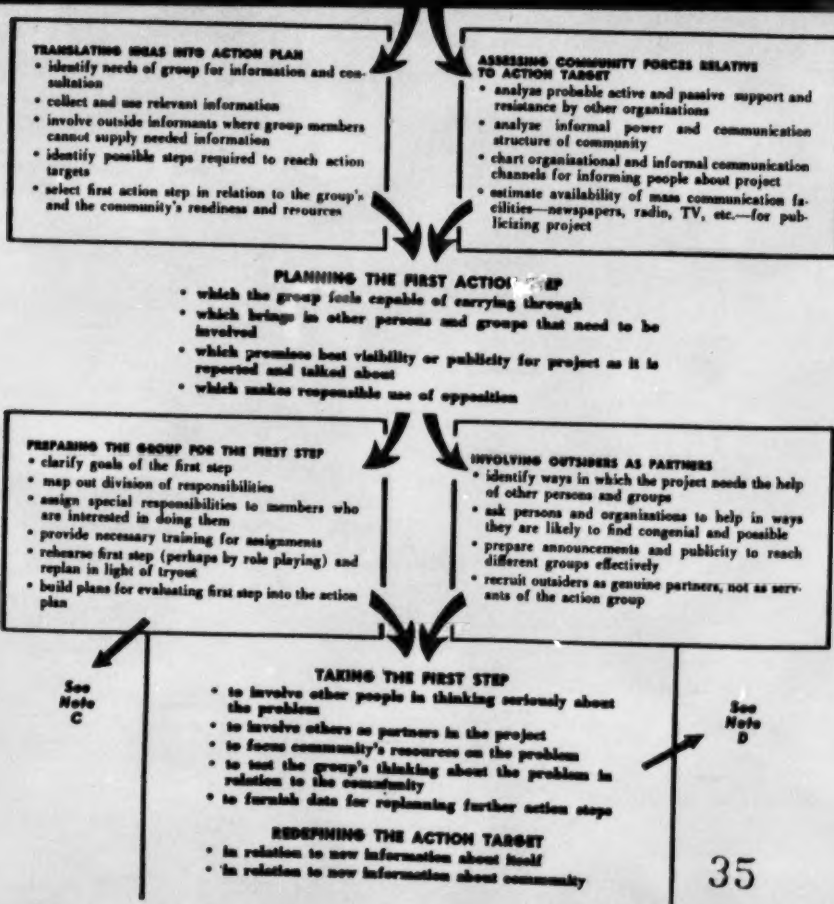
Members may have many motives: getting the problem solved, venting righteous indignation, putting over a pet project, getting attention, getting revenge on some other group, blocking some other program, and others. None of these is necessarily "bad" or "good." But they are dangerous if they operate as hidden motives, interfering with rational planning and effective action.

Note B

The group must select a general field of action—housing rather than international relations, or race relations rather than mental health. Then the group must define a specific project within the chosen field—for example, within race relations, working for fair employment practices in the town's industries, or working against race labeling by the town's newspapers. Often the impetus to action comes from a few interested persons, or arises from some dramatic incident.

Note C

The action group will develop feelings of high morale and of increasing confidence in its own ideas as it works out its preliminary plans. It must guard against seeing its first step as missionary work by the faithful and informed among the heathen and ignorant outsiders. It must try to see its purpose as leadership in getting the problem understood and solved by the community, not as selling a "solution." The group should see its action steps as ways of learning better, along with other people, what the problem is and how it can best be solved.



Note D

Sooner or later, the action group has to move its action project out into the wider community. The group must take a first step toward actually implementing its plans and testing them. The first action step may take many forms—a series of programs in various organizations, interviews with key people of the community both to get their advice and invite their further participation, block organization of interested citizens, an invitation to interested people to consider and recommend further plans, pressure on official agencies, a mass meeting, a publicity campaign covering the problem and its seriousness, etc., etc. Whatever form the first step takes, it should be designed to get maximum involvement and also to test the action group's thinking about the pattern of community forces with respect to the problem, and about the best ways of channelling them into working out a solution.



"Mr. Linsky—can we count on your organization to co-operate with ours on a project to . . ."



COUNTER-ATTACK

IT IS not uncommon for community groups to find themselves under attack. In a democracy anyone may question the policies and actions of all institutions. A major source of strength in a free society is freedom to dissent, to disagree, to question, to discuss.

Sometimes, however, dissent becomes dissension. Screaming headlines, vicious rumors, twice-told half-true tales—and just plain misunderstandings—can ruin a drive for funds or a plea for taxes, stop a sorely needed new program, force retrenchment in an old one, spoil the accumulated work of months or years, crucify respected workers and leaders—or crush even a well established community organization.

But institutions, whether they like it or not, must learn to endure such conditions and to perform efficiently under them. They must appreciate that public opinion plays a dominant role in our society. Any enterprise—social, industrial, professional or political—needs to develop competence in dealing intelligently with public opinion.

Particular situations demand particular solutions. There are, however, a number of considerations that organizations may use as guides to intelligent action. Some may point to ways of changing a distressing situation into a constructive, revitalizing experience.

POINT 1—Are the issues actually important? Or is the criticism of a kind that may better go unanswered? As

a general rule, a community group can seldom ignore criticism. In this connection consider:

First: The source. Is the source of criticism respectable and responsible? Or does it have a reputation for harping, fault-finding and trouble-making?

Second: The plausibility of the attack. If the attack appears unreasonable in the eyes of the general public, the element of implausibility may supply all the answer necessary.

Third: The prominence of the attack. It may have gained so little notice that public denial would only call attention to the charges.

Fourth: The nature of the attack. An important criticism (for example, that an adoption agency prevents adoptions) should not be ignored because it seems implausible or because only a few people have heard it. The risk of leaving misunderstandings is a serious one.

Fifth: The obligation of the organization. It is a mistake to assume that in an issue of importance to the public an organization is under no obligation to lay its cards on the table. In candor there is strength, and in unwillingness to be candid lies the possibility of damage—much more than people sometimes realize.

Sixth: Appearances. Refusal to answer a public charge implies to many that an organization is either guilty, or trying to put itself above criticism. Appearance and proof admittedly are two wholly different things; nevertheless, there is a great deal of truth in the axiom that "appearances count."

POINT 2—"Look before you leap." If your Civic Club is accused of misappropriating funds, a preliminary reply is possible, with an assurance that a full response will be made. This may be better than complete silence, and it will give needed time to get more information. A too hasty reply may cause self-inflicted damage. While it is essential to get the facts promptly, it is even better to have them beforehand, and often it is possible. Storms rarely come without warning.

POINT 3—Consider as objectively as possible what lies behind the charges. Maybe the Independent Voters has

become exclusively a women's club (or a men's). All organizations can and do make mistakes. Groups can get out of step with their communities. They can be too close to their own interests to see where weakness lies. One value of criticism is that it provides an opportunity for the correction of unsuspected faults.

To accept criticism and improve by it is one way in which an organization can win community respect. The public generally will be found pretty fair when it is informed. It is usually ready to give credit where credit is deserved. But if no action or correction is required, the public should be told why. It expects either correction or explanation.

POINT 4-In light of the facts, decide as a group what your position ought to be. Get agreement inside your organization before seeking understanding outside it. An attack raises doubts within the group. The parts of the organization may begin to pull away from one another under the stress of controversy. Maybe some members of your Farm Family Federation agree with those who have attacked your school program. The organization's position should be one which its own people can support. Criticism from outside is by no means automatically rejected by all groups within the family.

POINT 5-Tell your supporters and friends the facts and your position before any public statement is made, if you can. Those who are "in the family" deserve the truth and are interested in hearing it. Your own friends (other child welfare groups, other church groups, other civic groups) should be your most important source of support. They are far more likely to listen to you and to do something about your problem than those whose interest is merely casual.

It should be kept in mind that associated organizations may wonder whether they should defend you or stand on the sidelines. Supporters, financial or otherwise, may begin to feel uncomfortable.

Particularly after a surprise attack, a group should move to re-establish confidence. In times of emergency it needs the strength of unity. This is the time to rally

friends, associates and supporters. It is the time to seek public expressions of faith and renewed interest.

POINT 6-Attitude is important. It is difficult to resist the urge to make a hot rejoinder. There are times when righteous indignation is in order. The public itself may be angered by what it considers a reckless or malicious charge, and it may think more highly of the victim if he retorts with strong feeling instead of taking things lying down.

But remember that anger may stimulate and extend the controversy. It may lock an organization into an undesirable position from which it will be difficult to withdraw later. Hotheadedness makes it difficult to minimize the conflict and to re-establish peace. No matter what the facts may be, it is wise for your side not to endanger its good judgment by giving way to emotion.

POINT 7-Talk to your critics. Before entering a public battle, make sure that the critic himself hasn't some honest misconceptions which might govern his whole attitude. This may, indeed not accomplish anything. On the other hand, it may; and if it does, the effort will have been highly worth while. In any event, it is a reasonable step to take just as early as possible. Before the controversy has gained much momentum, see whether the trouble cannot be cleared up at the source.

POINT 8-Use criticism as a constructive device. The attention of the public is extremely hard to get. And while the kind of attention that is brought about by criticism may not seem desirable, it may actually have great value. Should a Community Chest, for example, come under fire, it may use the attack on it to advantage. While answering the charges, it can help the public see more clearly the basic value of the organization and it can increase the public's appreciation of the services performed in its behalf. A few well-thought-out statements at such a time, particularly if accompanied by some action that portrays the real nature of the organization, can pay off. They may be noticed and remembered by people who

would pay no attention to columns of campaign publicity. Try to take advantage of criticism.

An organization's strongest defense against attack will always be an existing reservoir of good will. Any group in planning to answer criticism might do well to spend considerable time considering what it should be doing currently to build a positive position in the community. Every group has to work at the job of bringing regularly before the public its purposes, backing and accomplishments. ◇ ◇

GUIDES TO ACTION

The first aim is to avoid letting a fire in the barn burn down both the barn and the house. Confine the conflict.

Good sense and an honest look at the facts will help. A fair discussion with the attacker may help. A pugnacious reply not only may not help but, on the contrary, may only toss a burning brand into the hay.

Do your best to treat the source of attack with fairness and with consideration of its point of view. Edmund Burke wrote: "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom."

Speak out, but speak with the dignity that your organization hopes for from others and that will add to its own good name.

People close to the organization must get the facts of the case promptly. All concerned are entitled to the truth.

If controversy is unavoidable, then the object must be to unite all the people on your side behind an honest position. All the devices that can get the facts before friends should be used.

Take corrective action if needed. If none is needed, make clear why this is so. And if the conflagration cannot be avoided, its light may be used to illuminate the good services of the organization.

THE LOST ART OF CONTROVERSY

RECENTLY one of the major networks televised an excellent program based on Orwell's 1984. The program was a dramatic demonstration of the diabolic results of authoritarianism, thought control, and demagoguery. Ironically, the very actors in the program had first been screened for their political views by the network. Moreover, in recent years a considerable number of actors and commentators have been blacklisted by the networks on unproven, undocumented charges; frequently on the basis of rumor and hearsay alone. Unfair charges and blacklisting have not been limited, of course, to the radio and television networks. But the Orwell incident dramatizes the contradiction between our avowed ideals and our practices.

In adult education we have always assumed that any issue or problem of public interest might be included in an educational program so long as the different points of view were presented and an atmosphere of free discussion was provided. Not only was this deemed permissible, it was taken for granted and strongly advocated. How else was a well informed citizenry to be developed other than through free and public discussion of controversial issues?

Furthermore, educators had faith in the good judgment and intelligence of the American people and believed that, given the facts, Americans could draw their own conclusions and make intelligent decisions on public issues. The majority of citizens also supported this point of view as evidenced by the American Institute of Public Opinion poll on whether controversial issues should be taught in the schools. This poll was reported in all major newspapers May 17, 1936.

A considerable change has taken place since the war. Freedom of discussion has been attacked, loyalty oaths have been imposed upon teachers in public school systems and universities. Teachers, professors and school administrators have been discharged and pilloried not only for holding non-conformist views but on the mere charge that they held such views. Self-appointed saviors of the American mind and conscience now tell us which books we may or may not read, who we may or may not hear, and what we may or may not think.

THE DRIVE AGAINST FREEDOM

The case of Dr. Goslin in the Pasadena Schools and more lately that of Dr. Ebey in Houston, Texas, are among the better known, but for each well publicized case there are many others of contracts unrenewed and teachers silenced with little attendant publicity. Perhaps most serious of all is the resulting *self-censorship* by educators, the extent of which is difficult to estimate but which is undoubtedly great.

It is imperative that the extent and nature of the drive against freedom of speech and thought be fully understood. The witch hunters started with political dissidents. Ostensibly the object was to expose Communists and subversives without clearly defining who or what was subversive. The attacks have since widened to include union leaders, attorneys, doctors, publishers, ministers, and finally the U. S. Army itself. How insane can they get? In the minds of many people the real objective of these attacks is not to ferret out disloyal citizens but to stifle criticism, to establish conformity of thought and to eliminate traditional American concepts of free expression and objective exploration of ideas.

Aside from the job fatalities among those educators who have attempted to maintain some independence of thought and belief, the price the country is paying in the stultification of instruction in our schools is incalculable. The recent survey by the National Education Association stating that a majority of teachers report that they avoid controversial issues in their classrooms is a sad day for American education and democracy.

The seriousness of the current drive for conformity is highlighted by Supreme Court Justice Black in his

opinion on the Oklahoma loyalty oath. "Test oaths," he said, "are notorious tools of tyranny. When used to shackle the mind they are, or at least they should be, unspeakably odious to a free people."

He recalled the Alien and Sedition Laws enacted early in this country's history "by zealous patriots who feared ideas and made it highly dangerous for people to think, speak or write critically about government, its agents or its policies, either foreign or domestic."

Justice Black said constitutional liberties survived that ordeal only "because there were influential men and powerful organized groups bold enough to challenge the undiluted right of individuals to publish and argue for their beliefs, however unorthodox or loathsome. For this and other reasons, the present period of fear seems more ominously dangerous to speech and press than was that of the Alien and Sedition Laws. Suppressive laws and practices are the fashion. The Oklahoma Oath Statute is but one manifestation of a national network aimed at coercing and controlling the minds of men."

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that adult education administrators, too, have grown timid and fearful about sponsoring programs or classes dealing with controversial issues. Even worse, in many instances where controversial issues are discussed the presentations are heavily or even exclusively weighted to represent the conservative, the safe, the respectable point of view. They have little educational value and tend to the very propaganda type education we object to in authoritarian states.

WE NEED INTEGRITY AND FAIRNESS

The above is not particularly novel. Hutchins and others have vigorously denounced the witch-hunters. Ed Murrow's programs on McCarthy have finally stimulated a mass revulsion against the tactics of the arch demagogue of them all, which may well lead to a restoration of sanity and traditional American values. Adult educators, on the whole, however, have not been especially vocal in defending complete freedom of discussion and information. Yet it lies at the very heart of their activities. In the months to come the courage and determination of adult educators may well help to turn the tide.

In programing discussions of controversial issues

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then, of paramount importance is the determination to handle them with integrity. This means presenting fairly the differing, pertinent points of view, including those that may not be generally popular or may even be anathema to the majority of us. One might go so far as to say that it would be better not to program controversial issues at all than to make the one-sided presentations that are all too frequent today. There are enough agencies of public information already engaged in the highly partisan presentation of news and views without educational agencies becoming subverted to similar ends.

This emphasis on fair presentation of differing points of view may seem axiomatic and at one time may have been superfluous, but cannot currently be too strongly emphasized. The great difficulty is that in the present climate we frequently, despite ourselves, tend to think in terms of but one point of view—the dominant, accepted view—where in the past on the same issues we might have been at least aware of the existence of more than one point of view. The great danger is not merely that we are becoming cautious but that we are being intellectually seduced and blinded because it is safer to be a little blind and to keep out of trouble than to see clearly and jeopardize our jobs.

WE NEED HONESTY

The first prerequisite then is honesty with ourselves and the issues with which we are dealing. If the crucial problems facing mankind today are to be met with intelligence and if cataclysm is to be avoided—adult educators must shun self-deception at all costs.

Assuming then a determination to handle controversial issues honestly, we are still faced with the practical problem of not only sponsoring such programs but of being able to maintain the program in the face of possible attack and criticism. Two problem areas present themselves; first, the problem of securing community support, second, how do we handle the program itself in the classroom or in the lecture hall?

While there is probably no way of making an honest educational program which includes discussion of controversial issues, completely immune from irresponsible attack and calumny, there are a number of practical

measures which can reduce the possibility and strength of such attacks.

WE NEED COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In the area of community support the most important step is to secure either a sponsoring committee consisting of outstanding and respected citizens in the community or a leading civic organization or organizations to sponsor the program. Frequently the most conservative community leaders will be willing to sponsor an educational program, no matter how controversial, so long as they are convinced that the issues will be honestly handled and conflicting points of view will be represented.

Having advisory committees or sponsoring organizations for a particular program is helpful even when the program is being put on by the public schools or an educational agency which already has an appointed or elected board of leading citizens. By having additional sponsoring organizations or a sponsoring committee for a public discussion program, the board of the agency presenting the program is assured of community support and is less likely to feel insecure or jittery, an affliction to which boards are currently peculiarly allergic.

That this can be successfully done, even when extremely controversial materials are handled, has been demonstrated by the American Foundation for Political Education. Although the reading materials which are used in its discussion groups include Marxist and Soviet selections, the Foundation and the hundreds of discussion groups it sponsors throughout the country have been free from attack. There would appear to be little question but that one of the major reasons for the relative absence of criticism has been the fact that in every community where it has launched discussion groups the Foundation has secured the sponsorship of respectable organizations and individuals. In a half dozen California communities Junior Chambers of Commerce are sponsoring the discussion groups—in others: Rotary Clubs, Lion Clubs, the American Association of University Women, and other public and civic organizations.

It is not enough, however, to get nominal support of civic or communal organizations. They should be involved in the program itself whenever possible. Involvement can

be secured by:

1. Having publicity releases announcing the program—particularly the initial ones—either emanate from the sponsoring group or quote their views and support of the program.
2. Inviting the president of the sponsoring organization or an outstanding civic leader either to chair or open the first meeting.
3. Having the sponsoring organization activate its own membership to attend and to participate in the program.

On the whole it will be found that active participation by the most conservative of persons will—if the issues are objectively treated—enlist their whole-hearted support.

HOW SHALL WE PUT THE QUESTION?

Now on the handling of the issues themselves, the wording of the question is extremely important. The way a question is worded can evoke extremely varied responses. Formulating a question in loaded terms evokes emotional and irrational reactions. Questions should be stated in terms of the problem or need. For example, to state the problem of medical care in such terms as, "Is socialized medicine desirable?" immediately reduces the possibility of objective discussion. Reactions of many normally rational people to the term itself is visceral and precludes intelligent discussion. Furthermore, it confuses the real issues because it immediately places the emphasis on a proposed solution rather than on problems and needs after which alternative solutions can be discussed. If the issue, on the other hand, were stated as, "What are our medical needs and how can they best be met?" one readily sees how a far more rational and meaningful discussion can take place and how important factual information can first be provided, divorced of any slogans or such fighting words as "socialized medicine."

Similarly in discussions on the United Nations or UNESCO—the issue should never be worded, "Is the UNESCO (or the United Nations) program contrary to United States interests?" (A recent discussion program sponsored by an adult education agency stated the issue in just those terms.) Obviously when the problem is so

stated, UNESCO or the United Nations is placed in a defensive position and the real problems are never brought to light. Stating the issue as follows, "What are the crucial problems confronting the United Nations and how can they be met?" will stimulate an entirely different kind of discussion and in most instances a more constructive one.

In the handling of the discussion itself the following suggestions may be helpful:

1. The problem under discussion should be carefully defined and delimited. Too frequently the topic is so broad it cannot possibly be adequately discussed in the time available.
2. Some historical or factual background to the problem should be made available as a basis for the discussion.
3. Discussion or debate over ascertainable facts or information should not be permitted. Provision should simply be made to secure the information.
4. Attention of the group should be focused on the problem and the needs rather than on the controversy.
5. Whenever possible primary sources of information rather than hearsay should be used. In foreign affairs discussions, particularly, it is extremely important to have available the official statements or editorial opinions of foreign governments and periodicals, not just our own versions of their views.
6. The group should be encouraged to be realistic about proposed alternatives to a problem.
7. The leader or teacher should not lend the weight of his position to particular alternatives or decisions.

The difficulties we face today in providing free and productive discussion of controversial issues are admittedly considerable and cannot be minimized. On the other hand, at no time were they more necessary. The suggestions made above cannot give final and complete guidance but they have been found useful in a large number of successful programs. If we can multiply and expand these programs the battle for progress and enlightenment will be won. ◇ ◇

A QUICK LOOK INTO CONFLICT

Conflict, like the conflicted, is undergoing analysis these days. A specialized tool to help people analyze social conflict is the Conflict Episode Analysis*. There are seven steps a person or an organization may take in attempting to understand and develop training in social conflict.

- **Clearly identify the conflict.**

This step is very important for the success of those that follow. In a school strike, for example, it must be decided whether the conflict is between the striking students and the school administration, between parents and the school board, or between other groups. If the conflict is between students and administration, who or what in administration is being attacked? The policies? The way in which the policies are being administered?

- **Present an acute phase of conflict as an illustration of its whole nature.**

Presentation of an acute phase of the conflict should be concise but should give a clear picture of who the contending factions are, who the chief people in the factions are, and what at a crucial moment their action is.

- **Select the most determinative situational and historical factors in the conflict.**

How long has the conflict been brewing? What is its social and economic background? What political factors enter in? What areas of community life are involved (institutions, education, degree of employment, health, recreation)? How many people are affected and in what ways? Is the conflict between tradition and the new way? Between differing concepts of the new way?

*For a more detailed explanation, see: Giles, H. Harry. "Conflict Episode Analysis—a Tool for Education in Social Technology," *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 26, May 1953, No. 9. pp. 418-433.

● **Diagnose symptoms and causes.**

There should be a recognition of the difference between symptoms and causes. The fact that there has been a fight between a Negro and a white child, for example, is symptomatic of conflict. The cause of the fight may be that the children dislike each other as individuals, it may be that tension between Negro and white groups exists in the neighborhood of the fight, it may be that both children have been subject to authoritarian treatment.

● **Develop treatment.**

State what has already been done in the situation. Suggest other things that could be done.

● **Identify the results of the conflict to date and predict future results.**

List any results apparent to date. Test predictions made, by keeping track of what actually happens.

● **Draw conclusions about the dynamics of behavior, the principles which govern methods of treatment, and the questions as yet unsolved which will require further study.**

- a) Why did this man do what he did? Or this woman? Why did this or that group respond to the situation as it did?
- b) In identifying principles of treatment, consider the steps actually taken and attempt to find a rationale which will put into general terms the specific way in which things were actually done.
- c) In every analysis there are many unsolved questions. These can lead to considerable growth. Often a conscious recognition that they do not know what the real causes of a controversy are, or what the whole range of possibilities for handling outcomes can be, leads people to fruitful solutions of controversial issues.

When an organization carries out these seven steps, it sets the stage for a clinical discussion during which leaders and members can develop an awareness of a way of handling controversy that is close to science and close to art in effectiveness and impact.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

YOUR COMMITTEE IN COMMUNITY ACTION, by Clarence King. Harper, 1951. Deals with everyday questions about the use of action committees.

GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION, by Mark S. Matthews. Harper, 1954. Ways to interest members, organize committees, raise funds, plan public relations.

THESE THINGS WE TRIED, by Jean and Jess Ogden. University of Virginia Extension Division, 1948. Case stories of problems in real communities and how they were solved.

DEMOCRACY IS YOU, by Richard W. Poston, Harper, 1953. How to organize a study group to plan community action.

"Group Dynamics and Social Action". Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 212 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N.Y. Methods for the solution of action problems.

"Organizing a Community Council". Community Adult Education, University of Michigan Extension Service, University High School, Ann Arbor. What a community council is, what it does, and how it can be maintained.

"Community Education in Action." Adult Education Association, 743 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 11, Ill. Community organization and adult education.

"Building Better Communities." *Adult Leadership*, May, 1955, *Adult Leadership*, 743 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 11, Ill. Workshop on organizing groups for community growth.

"Scoreboard for Your Town". New York State Citizen's Council, 613 E. Genesee St., Syracuse 2, N.Y. A list of ten points for rating a community.

"Quarterly Checklist of Current Publications on Community Organization". Association for the Study of Community Organization, 1 Park Ave., New York 16, N.Y.

"You and Your Community". A series of study-discussion guides for studying community action problems and processes. Information about the availability of these materials in your community may be obtained from the Fund for Adult Education, 1444 Wentworth, Pasadena 5, Calif.

AUDIO-VISUALS

THE TALE OF TWO TOWNS. Audio-Visual Education Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. A 16mm film showing citizen action for community development in two towns.

THE LIVING CITY. Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Wilmette, Ill. 16mm film showing redevelopment programs in a cross-section of American cities.

THE PEOPLE ACT. The People Act Center, State College, Penna. A series of long-playing records describing action programs in several communities.

ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF THE U.S.A.

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BOOKS

THE HANDBOOK OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

An authoritative working tool and standard reference for anyone concerned with adult education. Published by the Adult Education Association of the U. S. A. Edited by Malcolm S. Knowles, 656 pages.
Price: \$7.50 per copy. 1960.

AN OVERVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH

The first concise, up-to-date, factual report regarding the adult education field. Published by the Adult Education Association of the U. S. A., Edmund de S. Brunner, David Wilder, Corinne Kirchner and John S. Newberry, Jr., Authors. 278 pages.
Price: \$4.00 per copy. 1959.

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR ADULT LEARNING

A carefully edited report of a national conference on architecture for adult education. Sponsored by the Adult Education Association of the U. S. A. and the Division of Adult Education, Purdue University. Edited by Herbert C. Hunsaker and Richard Pierce, 116 pages.
Price: \$1.00 per copy. 1959.

ARCHITECTURE FOR ADULT EDUCATION

A graphic guide for those who are planning physical facilities for adult education. Compiled by the AEA Commission on Architecture, 74 pages.
Price: \$2.00 per copy.

ADULT EDUCATION ISSUES IN DISPUTE

A series of challenging opinions designed to encourage face to face discussion among individuals who care about these matter, about this movement, and about the outcome of this country's search for freedom and democracy. Published by the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. Edited by John Walker Powell, 80 pages.
Price: \$1.00 per copy. 1960.

INTRODUCING THE AEA

The AEA (Adult Education Association of the United States of America) is a non-profit organization founded in May, 1951, as an instrument for developing a united adult education movement. The general purposes of AEA, as stated in its Constitution, are:

- “To further the concept of adult education as a process continuing throughout life.
- “To promote and develop adult education in the United States by affording opportunities to professional and non-professional adult educators to increase their competence and by encouraging and assisting organizations and agencies . . . to develop adult education activities and to work together in the interests of adult education.
- “To receive and disseminate information about adult education.
- “To promote the balanced development of educational services for adult persons in the United States.
- “To cooperate with adult education agencies internationally.”

United in the AEA to further these purposes through a program including field services, conferences, publications, and public relations, are over 12,000 men and women who work with adults in formal and informal educational and training programs. These leaders represent every sector of American society—education, labor, agriculture, industry, religion, social welfare, government service, and a host of voluntary associations.

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